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<b>Shakespeare task</b>	
Task title: <i>Character Merchant of Venice</i>	
	Shakespeare task
<b>Contemporary Drama task</b>	
Task title: <i>Theme: Educating Rita</i>	
	Contemporary Drama task
<b>TOTAL MARK for unit:</b> <div style="text-align: right;">/50</div>	

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## English Literature: Unit 3 - Shakespeare and contemporary drama 5ET03/01

In this controlled assessment I am going to concentrate on the character of Shylock.

racial  
ed justice.

Shylock is probably the most important character in the play, ~~he~~ his character is used differently in both the play and the film to show the theme\*. Shylock is a Jew. The fact of this is what creates great controversy in the play. This is because in Elizabethan/Jacobean times Jews were despised and hated by Christians. This led to them being mainly unemployed by Christians, because of the hate and mistrust between them. They resorted to becoming money lenders, this is what Shylock is. From the play, I would interpret Shylock as a small, sour, slightly derailed old man turned this way from the racial abuse he has suffered throughout his life. Shylock's role in the play is that he is asked for a loan by the merchant, Antonio, and the price of not returning it is a pound of flesh from Antonio.

○  
Straight into  
insight  
linked to  
context

I will be looking at two different adaptations of the play, Shakespeare's original version and Michael Radford's 2004 film version. The two versions each portray Shylock in a different way. Shakespeare's version depicts Shylock as a villain, this is how Jews were thought of in those times. I believe Radford's film was influenced by the event of the Holocaust and he portrays Shylock as a victim. We can see examples of these two portrayals in the first encounter of Shylock in each version.

In Radford's version, ~~straight away~~ <sup>immediately</sup> we see Shylock and the Jews being verbally abused and pushed. We see him being spat on by Antonio, a Christian. This immediately provokes the audience to sympathise towards him and gives them a clear idea of the

✓ hatred towards Christians.

The contrast ~~is~~ between the two can be seen in Act 1 scene 3 of the play. Shylock is asked for the ducats indirectly through Bassanio from Antonio. Shylock says "Three thousand ducats, well." and then throughout the rest of the conversation repeats "well" at the end of each sentence.

The "well" suggests how confident he is, and how happy he is that he is in power. He talks calmly, using pros, but when Antonio arrives he becomes more unsettled and begins to talk in iambic pentameter. "I hate him for he is a Christian" This quote portrays Shylock as

the one who is judging and hating, furthermore presenting him to us as a villain. As he is in power, he also <sup>tries</sup> to make Bassanio and Antonio ~~more~~ lower than him. He says "I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you", here he is putting himself high above them, reveling in the power he has over the people who usually have all the power over him.

This power status is completely different in the film.

Radford has casted Al Pacino and made him look small, shy and rough. Antonio speaks clearly and calmly, whereas Shylock almost shouts to get his word across. Radford has

also used camera angles that make Antonio seem higher up and taller than Shylock. This portrays Shylock as lower in status than him, and this is further evidence of Radford presenting Shylock as a victim.

In the film, Antonio also often just refers to Shylock as "Jew", which emphasises his lack of respect and stereotyping of him, furthermore emphasising Shakespeare's theme of intolerance of the Jews. Antonio's intolerance of Shylock is also shown at the start, where Bassanio is asking the questions for him. "for which I told you, Antonio shall be bound." Bassanio says. This indirect

perceptive point / analysis of long sustained

discrimination / elevation

*Sustained evaluation*  
Conversation from Antonio is almost a statement from him to Shylock, blatantly showing the disrespect he has for him.

*Comp shows insight*  
In Act 3 scene 1 we begin to see Shylock's deteriorating state in both the play and Radford's interpretation. We see Shylock with Salanio and Solanio in a street. Shylock is hugely stressed and angered with his daughter running off with a Christian. He shows his frustration with the abuse and persecution he has suffered throughout his life. "Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases." This quote shows Shylock's pure anger and lack of understanding of the persecution he suffers. This quote is a response to Salanio asking why he would take Antonio's flesh to punish him. This response shows him almost offended and shocked by the remark and he explains why he ~~sees~~ longs getting revenge, portraying <sup>the</sup> villainy and evil of Shylock to the audience.

*evaluation of ways of expressing meaning*  
Radford's interpretation is very similar, but Shylock is presented as very prestrated, it seems as though he is ~~at~~ in mental agony. Again, Radford has chosen camera angles which make Shylock seem smaller than both Salanio and Solanio, emphasising the lack of power he has and showing him as helpless and vulnerable.

In act 2 scene 2, Lancelot describes Shylock as being "the very devil incarnation" showing his thoughts of Shylock as ~~a~~ a villain. This again, restates the theme of the persecution of the Jews in that time, and how in Shakespeare's time this discrimination was common and acceptable.

perhaps the most significant scene in the play is the court scene. <sup>(Act 4 scene 1)</sup> The play shows Shylock revelling in the power he has, "....

✓ rather choose to have a weight of cannon flesh than to receive three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that -" This quote shows his contentment with his intentions, it portrays his huge lust for revenge on Christianity. Shylock shows no mercy throughout the court and the ~~audience~~ <sup>audience</sup> lose sympathy to him and his villainous intentions.

Radford portrays this scene similarly. However, the audience in the court are shown as strongly against Shylock to back up Radford's portrayal of Shylock as a victim. It ~~gives~~ <sup>makes</sup> the audience sympathise towards Shylock. Radford has again used camera angles which make Shylock seem small and powerless, with the rest of the room dominating his presence. He also uses the quiet music of a violin to emphasise Shylock's sadness ~~as~~ as a victim. The film shows Shylock as a sobbing wreck, whimpering in the middle of the room before scuttling out. This really makes us sympathise and gives us a last statement of the victimisation of Shylock and furthermore emphasises the unfair persecution of the Jews. In contrast, the play shows Shylock as a more composed loser, he leaves in a calm manner. His parting words are "send the deed after me and I will sign it." He has accepted his loss but Shakespeare has not made <sup>the audience</sup> feel sympathy for him as he leaves composed.

Both interpretations show the deterioration of Shylock, however Radford ~~emphasises~~ <sup>really emphasises</sup> Shylock's poor condition to give the audience a clear idea of the racial prejudice in the time. Shakespeare's play was more accepted in that time, the persecution of the Jews at that time influenced him to portray Shylock as a villain, however Radford ~~emphasises~~ emphasises Shylock's ~~persecution and~~ victimisation because nowadays it is not acceptable.

## Educating Rita - theme

In the play, Educating Rita, there are a number of themes presented. These include class differences, social mobility, change and education. I will be focussing on education, this is because I believe education involves all the other themes above.

Rita is a 26 year old woman. She is part of the working class society in the 1980's, she wants to escape from this working class name. The way she plans to get out of this, is through education. She sees education as a ticket out of there, a passport to higher class respect. For her education, she comes to the open university scheme, it is here that she meets Frank. Frank is a bored, uninterested tutor, who has lost his love for what he does. As he meets Rita, he becomes uplifted by her, he describes her as a 'breath of fresh air.' At first, their two personalities clash, with Frank seeming almost irritated by Rita's bubbly, quirky personality. You can see this in his short responses to her enthusiastic questions; Rita - 'Do you get a lot of students like me?' Frank - 'Not exactly, no...' His blunt answer seems almost rude, it is as though he is shocked at how different she is. However in this quote also shows his dullness and lack of interest for his job.

Language is a key way through which the theme of education is presented.

At the beginning of the play, Rita is <sup>an</sup> uneducated, working class woman. The writer has emphasised her working class stereotype through the dialect she uses. Her dialect features words such as



*sustained analysis perceptive understanding*  
'wanna' instead of 'want to', and 'd'y' instead of 'do you'. She also asks ~~retardingly~~ questions which you could say are immature such as 'is it supposed to be erotic?'. She comes out with this absurd question on her first meeting with Frank, expressing her informality as a working class woman.  
In contrast, Frank's dialect is the complete opposite. It features no colloquial terms, just as you would expect a stereotypical educated tutor to be.  
The contrast of the two characters' dialect is the writer's way of making the audience jump to immediate conclusions about their class and education.

*perceptive understanding*  
Rita and Frank discuss the nature of swearing where they both agree it is acceptable. She says 'See, ~~the~~ ~~and~~ the educated classes know it's only words? It's only the masses that don't understand? I think that here she is trying to prove her analytical potential to Frank. However, she is also stereotyping the masses, ~~almost~~ as if she is trying to put herself above them. This is where we see her bunting at the prejudice that comes with education. It's the beginning of her escaping her class label.

*perceptive*  
Rita wants to become educated. However she doesn't ~~have~~ want this for the knowledge. She sees it as a passport out of the working class society, something she wants to break free of. She claims she wants to know 'everything'. This shows her naivety, and ~~she~~ gives a clear picture that she doesn't know what she is actually doing in education. She just

~~Answer~~

wants to get through it to become higher class. Through Rita trying to change superlatively, we begin to see education being linked to social mobility.

However, the true education is knowledge based, ~~and~~ education should be all about learning new things.

This is not what it is to Rita, ~~she couldn't care less about~~ although she shows a passion for literature, ~~she~~ you can see she doesn't care for this as much as breaking free of her social class.

Throughout the play, we see Rita becoming more knowledgeable as she is being educated by Frank. However, likewise, Rita has 'educated' Frank. She changes him and shows him why he shouldn't give up on his life. Her previous education enables her to see that Frank is frustrated and jaded by the system of education. By the end of the play he is more positive and content with life. So is it really just 'Educating Rita'?

There is a metaphor in the play. When Rita first arrives at Frank's office, the door is stiff and will not open. This can be seen as the barrier between Rita and ~~being~~<sup>becoming</sup> higher class. When she returns the next day she oils the door to make it open with ease. This can be seen as Rita breaking through the barrier of her social class into education to the higher class, again showing the link between social mobility and education.

~~Through~~ By the end of the play, we can see her maturity and intelligence has grown. She has



become higher class and accepted into the life style. She has changed as ~~as~~ a person, maybe for the better. However on the way she has left her old friends behind, including frank. She no longer needs frank.